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Security Council

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Report of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, 12–15 January 2018

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 13 November 2017, the President of the Security Council informed the Secretary-General of the Council's intention to send a mission to Afghanistan in January 2018. The terms of reference for the visit were subsequently approved by the Council (see annex I). The mission, led by Ambassador the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, Kairat Umarov, comprised representatives of all current members of the Council: Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz (Bolivia), Minister Counsellor Shen Bo (China), Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire), Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea), Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia), Deputy Permanent Representative Anne Gueguen (France), Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Sh. A. Alotaibi (Kuwait), Ambassador Karel Jan Gustaaf van Oosterom (Netherlands), Ambassador Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru), Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), Deputy Permanent Representative Vladimir K. Safronkov (Russian Federation), Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden), Deputy Permanent Representative Jonathan Guy Allen (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and Ambassador Nikki R. Haley (United States of America). The Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal, joined the mission for parts of its visit.

II. Background

2. This was the Council's fifth visit to Afghanistan since 2001, having previously visited in November 2003, November 2006, November 2008 and June 2010. The mission left New York on 12 January and concluded its work on 15 January. The mission met the President of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, and members of the Cabinet, including the Ministers of Agriculture, Defence, the Economy, Finance, Foreign Affairs, the Interior, and Trade and Commerce, and the National Security Adviser and the Director General of the National Directorate for Security. They also met other key local figures, including: the Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga (lower house) of the National Assembly, Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi; the Speaker of the Meshrano Jirga (upper house), Fazal Hadi Muslimyar; the Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission; members of the Independent Electoral Commission and Electoral Complaints Commission; representatives of civil society organizations; and members of political parties. International interlocutors included: the Commander of the Resolute Support Mission

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of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), senior staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. All meetings were held in Kabul (see annex II for the schedule of meetings).

3. The purpose of the visit was to: underscore that a conflict-free and violence-free Afghanistan is critical for regional and global peace and security; underline the importance of an inclusive, Afghan-led and owned peace process, in which women's participation is promoted at all levels, for the long-term prosperity and stability of Afghanistan; reiterate the Council's support for the Government and people of Afghanistan and their efforts to rebuild the country and strengthen the foundations of sustainable peace and constitutional democracy; underscore the importance of continued progress with regard to electoral reform and the holding of credible and inclusive parliamentary elections in 2018 and presidential elections in 2019; express strong support for UNAMA in fulfilling its mandate as defined in resolution 2344 (2017); review efforts by the Government to address a wide range of interconnected challenges; identify how the Council can further assist efforts on the ground; recognize the importance of linking security and development objectives, in order to achieve durable peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and the wider region; emphasize the importance of a regional approach to supporting security and prosperity in and around Afghanistan and underline the Council's commitment to contributing constructively in that regard; and recommend greater coordination between United Nations agencies and programmes in order to increase the effectiveness of the assistance provided on the ground, ensure greater transparency in the administration, including through anti-corruption measures, foster the more effective use of shrinking development and humanitarian aid and thereby promote a harmonized United Nations approach in Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries.

4. The timing of the mission was significant, given the preparations for the second meeting of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation in February 2018, the district council and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2018 and the open debate held by the Council on 19 January 2018 on the subject "Building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development".

5. The mission, which was organized under the presidency of Kazakhstan, the first Central Asian country to sit as a member of the Security Council, also provided an opportunity to emphasize the importance of linking security and development objectives in achieving a durable peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and the wider region and to underline the Council's commitment to contributing constructively in that regard.

6. The mission emphasized the Council's continued support for the people of Afghanistan and the commitment of the international community to stability, peace and reconciliation and socioeconomic development in the country. It expressed support for the role of the United Nations in supporting Afghan-led efforts in those areas and urged the United Nations agencies present in Afghanistan and Central Asia to improve cooperation among themselves.

III. Key issues

Security situation

7. The members of the Council voiced concern about the continued security incidents and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, which had reached record numbers, the growing presence of Taliban militants and fighters affiliated to Islamic State of

Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), in particular in the north and the east of the country, and the use of increasingly violent tactics that had the potential to deepen ethnic and sectarian tensions. The return of foreign terrorist fighters from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic to regroup in Afghanistan represented a challenge, in addition to concerns about the potential use of the territory of Afghanistan to destabilize countries in the region.

8. The Council members expressed support for Mr. Ghani's efforts to reform the security sector and for greater international and regional cooperation in countering transnational terrorism, the movement of foreign terrorist fighters, extremism and criminal networks, including those involved in drug-trafficking. They also inquired about security for the forthcoming elections.

9. Mr. Ghani addressed the drivers of insecurity and outlined measures taken by his Government to respond to the security challenge. Recalling the political, economic and security transition of 2014 and subsequent developments, he emphasized that the Government was prioritizing reform of the security institutions, in particular the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior. Support by the international community for the Government in its efforts to reform the Ministry of the Interior would help to lessen the influence of regional strongmen. The security forces of Afghanistan were the first line of defence for global security. The world faced an emerging fifth wave of violence, forming a nexus between transnational terrorism and criminal networks, including drug-traffickers, exacerbated by State sponsorship of non-State armed groups. That "challenge of our generation" required a concerted response by the international community, combining military options with a State-building agenda. The year 2018 could either be the worst of the conflict thus far or, should the Taliban suffer a strategic loss, lead to gradual engagement in the peace process.

10. Mr. Abdullah stressed that State-sponsored terrorism in the pursuit of specific national interests could no longer be tolerated. There was consensus in the national unity Government on the need to pursue good relations with the country's neighbours and it had reached out to them. Nonetheless, the status quo remained unchanged and the persons whom the Afghan security forces were fighting lived outside Afghanistan. The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan group, however, might be able to operate from some Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan.

11. In a meeting on security issues attended by a number of senior government officials, the National Security Adviser, Mohammad Hanif Atmar, said that the conflict in Afghanistan constituted an evil axis of violent extremism, criminal networks and State-sponsored terrorism that threatened the wider region. The situation required a response combining peace and reconciliation efforts among Afghans, a regional counter-terrorism strategy, efforts to strengthen the Afghan State and international partnerships. The United States strategy on South Asia was widely welcomed, as was the support provided to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. The Director General of the National Directorate for Security, Masoom Stanekzai, provided details regarding the insurgent groups and their tactics. The two officials said that the Taliban, including the Haqqani Network, had about 30,000 to 35,000 fighters, who were focused primarily on Afghanistan. They had established links with criminal networks to fund their operations and were responsible for some 98 per cent of the attacks carried out in 2017. A further 7,500 fighters had reportedly escaped military operations conducted against them in Pakistan and relocated to Afghanistan, while between 1,200 and 1,700 foreign fighters from groups with links to Al-Qaida, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement and Jundullah, had come from neighbouring countries. Those groups posed a threat to their countries of origin and the wider region.

12. In addition, around 200 to 400 international terrorists linked to Al-Qaida and ISIL were said to be operating in Afghanistan. Mr. Atmar said that fighters affiliated to the latter's local branch, ISIL-KP, typically were recruited locally, not in the Syrian Arab Republic. Around 1,500 to 2,000 Pakistanis, mostly associated with Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, were fighting in the name of ISIL-KP in eastern Afghanistan, in particular in Nangarhar Province. Around 1,200 to 1,700 fighters had thus far switched allegiance from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement to ISIL-KP in the northern and north-eastern provinces. Some 2,500 to 3,500 Afghan Taliban had also switched allegiance to ISIL-KP and moved largely to the north and the north-east. ISIL-KP had been able to take hold in the eastern part of the country and increase its numbers since 2015 because of the reduction in military assets and activity, especially air strikes, deployed against them following the transfer of responsibility for security from the International Security Assistance Force to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. However, recent joint military operations carried out by the Afghan security forces and international military forces had resulted in the elimination of top ISIL-KP leaders and thousands of its fighters or their arrest and extradition to their countries of origin. The officials acknowledged the challenges facing the Afghan security forces, especially in terms of air force capabilities, leadership and the high attrition rate.

13. The Minister of the Interior, Wais Ahmad Barmak, provided details of the Government's strategy on narcotics and combating transnational drug networks and about the links between those networks and insurgent groups. He said that, in 2017, the Taliban had made between $400 million and $500 million from the drugs trade, compared with $1 billion to $1.5 billion for the drug-trafficking networks, $2 billion for the Pakistani Taliban and $6 billion for the international mafia.

14. Members of political parties welcomed the United States strategy for South Asia. They stressed the importance of fully equipping the Afghan security forces, in addition to providing them with training and advice. The Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Sima Samar, focused on the impact of the security situation on access to education and health care, and freedom of association and speech.

15. The commander of the NATO Resolute Support Mission, General John Nicholson, provided an overview of the security situation in Afghanistan, the United States strategy for South Asia and the road map of the Government of Afghanistan until 2020. He said that improvements in the capabilities and leadership of the Afghan security forces, in particular in the special forces and the air force, were resulting in more effective operations. As a result, Anti-government elements had had to lower their ambitions and adjust their tactics, reverting to suicide and guerrilla-style attacks that alienated the population. He elaborated on the joint operations against ISIL-KP by the Afghan security forces and international military forces and outlined elements of United States counter-terrorism operations. Dismissing as absurd allusions to the effect that the United States was supporting ISIL-KP, he said that joint operations had reduced the amount of territory under the group's control by two thirds. Contact between ISIL-KP and ISIL in the Syrian Arab Republic, including guidance and funding, had diminished greatly. ISIL-KP was able to survive only because of continual new recruitment from the ranks of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan. The United States would maintain the pressure and coordinate closely with Central Asian countries to prevent spillover.

16. General Nicholson said that military operations were not a solution in themselves but were conducted in support of an eventual political solution to the conflict. The Government controlled 64 per cent of the country; the rest was either contested or controlled by anti-government elements. Once the Government had regained control of 80 per cent of the territory, the Taliban would have more incentive

to join peace talks, especially if such talks were accompanied by a crackdown on sanctuaries. Afghanistan and the surrounding region together accounted for the highest concentration in the world of terrorist groups, as defined by the United States; hence the importance of securing Afghanistan and, by extension, "our homelands". On cooperation with the Russian Federation, there were three shared interests: countering terrorism, combating the drugs trade and promoting reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan. Given that the drugs trade accounted for around 60 per cent of funding for the insurgency, the United States had begun to target drug-trafficking facilities in Helmand Province.

Peace and reconciliation

17. Council members noted with concern the lack of tangible results in the peace process with the Taliban and underlined the need for negotiations between them and the Government. They concurred that there could be no solution to the conflict in Afghanistan in the absence of a political process and inquired how the Council could best support such a process. Some members asked whether there was national consensus on peace and stressed the importance of inclusivity.

18. Mr. Ghani outlined the Government's approach to seeking peace with the Taliban. He said that he favoured a three-phased approach: pre-negotiations, negotiations and verification. The international community had a key role to play in the third phase and in addressing the issue of cutting the flow of finance to the insurgents and in reintegration and job creation programmes for ex-combatants. He underscored the importance of involving women in any process and referred to the initiatives of the First Lady, Rula Ghani, and the High Peace Council in that regard. Referring to the peace process in Colombia, he said that the most important question was one of a trade-off: what price were the Afghan people willing to pay? The first meeting of the Kabul Process on Peace and Security Cooperation was the umbrella under which Afghanistan would work with its partners. Mr. Abdullah said that, although the absolute majority of the population favoured a peace process with the Taliban, they were also sceptical and concerned that the Government might sacrifice some of the people's rights. There was no clear sign from the Taliban of a willingness to join a peace process.

19. Mr. Atmar said that, since 2014, the national unity Government had worked to advance the peace process with the Taliban. The latter, however, had many incentives, such as benefitting from the illicit economy, for continuing to fight. Therefore, the right balance of disincentives and incentives was required. The Security Council could help by securing regional cooperation and by making use of sanctions. The head of the High Peace Council, Karim Khalili, described the body's structure and work, including its contacts with some members of the Taliban aimed at initiating more formal talks. The second meeting of the Kabul Process, scheduled for February 2018, would bring more concrete outcomes. Referring to the peace agreement with Hizb-i Islami of 2016, he stressed that any peace initiative had to be led and owned by Afghans. Further delay in launching a peace process with the Taliban would increase the danger of a proxy war in the region.

20. Members of political parties said that any peace process would be difficult because the States supporting terror organizations had their own interests. War, they said, was not an Afghan but rather an international phenomenon.

21. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of a peace and reconciliation process led and owned by Afghans, a view echoed by a number of parliamentarians and government officials. The second meeting of the Kabul Process would provide an opportunity to build consensus and move the process

forward. For other countries to rally around, however, more clarity was needed regarding the approach of the Afghan authorities.

Political situation and elections

22. Council members urged Mr. Ghani and Mr. Abdullah to maintain unity in the Government, which it needed in order to be able to deliver to the people, and reiterated the importance of holding free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections according to the agreed upon timetable. It was important for women to participate in those elections as candidates and voters. The President of the Council underlined that credible election results were important for stability. Council members asked how the lack of trust in the electoral management bodies could be overcome and how elections could become a vehicle for unity rather than for division. In their meeting with the electoral commissioners, Council members stressed the importance of safeguarding the independence of their institutions and inquired about the main challenges ahead. They also asked to be informed should the electoral management bodies run into obstacles.

23. Mr. Abdullah recalled that, following the contested elections of 2014, the first peaceful transfer of power had taken place in Afghanistan with the agreement to install the national unity Government. He said that opportunities had since been missed, in particular in terms of delayed electoral reform and the systemic flaws of a highly centralized political system. The electoral impasse in 2014 had required greater wisdom and long-term thinking. That situation, combined with the security transition and the fact that many people had lost their livelihoods in that period, had rendered the first three years of the national unity Government very difficult. Deliberate efforts to marginalize one side of the Government had contributed to the deeply rooted mistrust and political fragility facing the country. He and Mr. Ghani, nevertheless, remained committed to ensuring that the Government functioned until a new government was elected.

24. Mr. Ghani acknowledged that the widespread lack of trust represented a fundamental challenge and underscored the need for parliamentary and district council elections in 2018. Elections were crucial for consolidating democracy and peace. Because, however, the electoral management bodies were independent, his capacity to influence the process was limited. Mr. Ghani and other participants welcomed the robust involvement of the United Nations and the international community, in particular in terms of monitoring, but were critical of the electoral support, which had not created sufficient capacity and had included very poor advice, provided by the United Nations thus far. Mr. Abdullah described an environment of mistrust and emphasized the critical importance of electoral reform to ensure transparent and inclusive elections. He also noted the importance of the role to be played by the international community, including the United Nations, in that regard. Questionable elections would affect the political process, stability and development. With regard to security, most urban centres were relatively secure, meaning that elections could be held in around 60 per cent of the country.

25. Members of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission focused on the preparations for the forthcoming parliamentary and district council elections. They explained the steps that had been taken to assess polling stations and centres and preparations for voter lists based on national identification cards, which should reduce the incidence of multiple voting. They acknowledged that trust in the electoral management bodies was lacking, outlined measures to address the issue (for example, through regular meetings with political parties and civil society) and stressed their commitment to organizing transparent elections in 2018. They provided details of the electoral law, explained the role of the selection committee in nominating commissioners and noted the need for the support

of the Government and donors for the electoral process. Challenges included the difficult security environment, political tensions and the non-allocation of the electoral budget.

26. The Speakers of both houses of the National Assembly emphasized that the Assembly was keen for parliamentary elections to be held in 2018. Preparations, however, had been delayed and it was important that the Government did not interfere in the process. The lack of confidence in the electoral timetable and transparency of the electoral process was even more apparent among members of political parties. They welcomed the dismissal of the previous Chair of the Independent Election Commission but expressed doubt that parliamentary elections would be held, as scheduled, in 2018. They further stressed that the failure to hold presidential elections in 2019, as provided for in the Constitution, would mean the end of the post-Bonn era. The elections needed to be transparent, inclusive and impartial to ensure the credibility of the next government, rebuild people's trust in the institutions and prevent further destabilization.

27. The representative of the Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan, Yousuf Rashid, said that doubts were rife about the capacity of the electoral management bodies and about the electoral timeline. A comprehensive election plan, including security and logistics measures, was needed and the electoral management bodies must be made more sustainable. Representatives of several political groups expressed growing concern about factionalism within the Government, which had created political tensions, and called for the renewal of constructive dialogue between the political forces.

Governance, rule of law and human rights

28. Council members voiced appreciation for the efforts made by the Government to promote good governance, the rule of law and reforms, but underscored the need for more progress. Continued international support for the country's development was critical for peace and reconciliation. In that regard, the visit by the Council presented its members with an important opportunity to better understand the challenges facing the country and identify how they could best support the Afghan people and the Government.

29. Mr. Ghani outlined his Government's vision for responding to the major challenges facing the country, emphasizing the progress that had been made in implementing reform initiatives ranging from rule of law measures and combating corruption to overhauling the civil service system. Benchmarks, all of which had been achieved, had been set for every reform plan and agreed upon with the donor community. Revenues had increased over the previous three years. Measures to combat corruption included the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre. In addition to reform of the judiciary, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior, the civil service was being renewed by replacing retirees with younger staff, among them many women. He stressed that the country's most important asset was human capital and that Afghanistan would move forward, not backward. Mr. Abdullah expressed support for the President's reform agenda, provided that it was not used to advance a one-sided political agenda or to marginalize parts of the Government. He stressed that, to advance, the reform process must be inclusive and consultative.

30. The First Lady, Ms. Ghani, who was accompanied by several women officials, discussed with the Council members a wide range of issues, from the Government's plan for the economic empowerment of women to the health sector. She underscored the importance of drawing lessons from previous United Nations programmes and referred to the positive example of the work of the World Food Programme in Helmand Province. Another participant pointed out the need for long-term training

and mentor programmes for women entrepreneurs. A major challenge was access to finance, in particular because women did not have the right of inheritance. Access to markets was another challenge. Overall, participants stressed the desire to be seen as partners rather than beneficiaries.

31. Ms. Samar briefed the Council members on the human rights situation. She focused on children's rights, protection issues and civilian casualties and the situation of women. Noting the link between the lack of governance and support for anti-government elements, she stressed the importance of inclusivity in political processes and the need for more intra-Afghan political dialogue. She also deplored the continuing culture of impunity, in particular with regard to violence against women.

Socioeconomic development

32. The Kabul Process provides for the increasing transfer of responsibility for security and civilian matters to the Afghan authorities, but that does not mean that Afghanistan no longer needs assistance from the international community. In most of its meetings, Council members were told of the importance of the continued provision of aid, whether through counter-terrorism support (through cooperation on borders, data-sharing and capacity-building) or development assistance to the reconstruction process, including to the region.

33. The Minister of the Economy, Mustafa Mastoor, said that he was concerned that population growth was continuing to outpace the growth rate in Afghanistan, with 400,000 young people joining the labour market every year and 39 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. The country remained highly dependent on imports but was diversifying its trade partners.

34. Afghanistan, Council members were told, should have the central role in coordinating aid. Mr. Ghani reiterated his request for increased on-budget assistance and the implementation of the "One United Nations" initiative to ensure coherence among United Nations bodies. Other participants called for improved coordination to ensure that donor support reached those in need.

35. Although the Government emphasized the importance of development assistance in promoting stability in Afghanistan, discussions revealed a preference for a new paradigm, based not just on aid but rather, in particular, on increasing investment opportunities for trade, infrastructure, energy exchanges, market solutions and connectivity. Mr. Ghani emphasized the possibilities for investment in Afghanistan and that the interdependence of markets and transport routes between countries could create incentives for peace and development in the region.

Regional cooperation and connectivity

36. Council members emphasized the importance of integration between Afghanistan and the neighbouring region. Connectivity would not only bring economic benefits but also contribute to stability. The President of the Council invited Afghan interlocutors to provide their views on how to develop connectivity further and better coordinate efforts on the ground.

37. Mr. Ghani expressed satisfaction that Afghanistan had again become an integral part of Central Asia and outlined cooperation and trade agreements with various neighbouring countries. He said that economic development and greater regional cooperation would be crucial factors in achieving security in Afghanistan. The country's assets, which included its location as a "roundabout", water, natural resources and human capital, could facilitate the integration of Afghanistan into regional processes. In turn, regional initiatives would contribute to long-term stability in Afghanistan.

38. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Salahuddin Rabbani, also noted the importance of relations between Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia. In meetings on connectivity and infrastructure and on the economy, development, refugees and combating corruption, members of the Cabinet focused on opportunities in three areas: energy, goods and data. They spoke about the potential of several initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline, the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, plans for a fibre-optic corridor to China, the rapid development of railway corridors from Central Asian countries, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran to South Asia through Afghanistan and the development of the ports of Gwadar (Pakistan) and Chabahar (Islamic Republic of Iran) to provide landlocked countries in Central Asia with access to warm water ports.

39. Strong cooperation between neighbours is critical for promoting stability and prosperity in and around Afghanistan. This model of economic integration and stabilization can be used by any subregion to prevent conflict and restore peace.

International cooperation, "One United Nations" and requests to the Security Council

40. Council members noted the importance of maintaining international support and cooperation and, at the same time, the need for sustained progress with reform. They inquired about the work of the United Nations in the country, its cooperation with the Government and how the Council could best support the Afghan people and the Government.

41. Mr. Ghani reiterated his request for increased on-budget assistance and implementation of the "One United Nations" initiative. He said that he had requested the United Nations country team to review its model of assistance, which did not support national ownership. Instead of building parallel structures, on-budget assistance was required to "put the money where the reforms are". Lastly, he stressed the importance of the Security Council's unity and consensus on Afghanistan.

42. Mr. Abdullah asked the Council to address the issues of safe havens and cross-border violations and to implement the sanctions regime more rigorously. Mr. Atmar emphasized the Council's role in securing the region's cooperation and in using the sanctions regime as a means of dissuasion and persuasion. Ms. Samar said that UNAMA, in particular its political arm, should continue its work in Afghanistan. With regard to human rights, there was no need for capacity-building, but rather closer cooperation with the Mission. A representative of the Afghan Women's Network, Hasina Safi, making particular reference to the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace, said that the performance of the Mission had improved over the years and that the Network would like it "to listen" and "to be with us". Noting the role of the United Nations in supporting and strengthening civil society, she said that civil society groups were key stakeholders that would not be satisfied with a merely token presence around the table. There was no need for new strategies but rather the implementation of the existing one.

Annex I

Terms of reference of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

1. The Security Council will carry out its mission to Afghanistan from 12 to 15 January 2018 within the context of and in line with: presidential statements on the situation in Afghanistan (S/PRST/2014/12 and S/PRST/2016/14); resolution 2344 (2017) on the situation in Afghanistan; the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (A/72/392–S/2017/783); the special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (A/72/312–S/2017/696); and the eighth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2255 (2015) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan (contained in document S/2017/409).

2. The members of the Council will meet representatives of the Government of Afghanistan, members of political parties, representatives of civil society and members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Resolute Support Mission. The main objectives of the mission will be:

(a) To underscore that a conflict and violence-free Afghanistan is critical for regional and global peace and security;

(b) To reiterate the support of the Council for the Government and people of Afghanistan and their efforts to rebuild their country, strengthen the foundations of sustainable peace and constitutional democracy and assume their place in the community of nations;

(c) To express strong support for UNAMA and its Head, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, in fulfilling their mandates as defined in resolution 2344 (2017);

(d) To review efforts by the Afghan authorities in support of an Afghan-led development and stabilization process and, with the assistance of the international community, in addressing the instability caused by the Taliban, including the Haqqani Network, and the threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan and the region posed by Al-Qaida, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant affiliates and other terrorist groups, violent and extremist groups, illegal armed groups, criminals and those involved in the drugs trade, trafficking in persons and in the diversion of chemical precursors;

(e) To underscore the importance of continued progress on electoral reform and towards the holding of credible and inclusive parliamentary elections in 2018 and presidential elections in 2019;

(f) To underline the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led and owned peace process, in which the participation of women is promoted at all levels, for the long-term prosperity and stability of Afghanistan;

(g) To review the progress made by the national unity Government, with the assistance of the international community, including through capacity-building initiatives, in addressing interconnected challenges, including in the areas of security, economic and social development, governance, human rights and the rule of law, the empowerment of women, regional cooperation and combating the drugs trade;

(h) To encourage increased cooperation and coordination between Afghanistan and the Central Asian States, including through intergovernmental relations and personal contacts;

(i) To encourage also increased cooperation and coordination between UNAMA, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and other relevant United Nations agencies and regional organizations in order to strengthen the region's capacity to overcome challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development, including terrorism, cross-border organized crime, trafficking in illicit drugs and in persons, irregular migration and the use of the Internet for criminal purposes;

(j) To recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, reaffirm the primary responsibility of the Government and authorities in identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities for sustaining peace and, in that regard, emphasize that inclusivity, including by ensuring the full and effective participation of women, is the key to advancing the peacebuilding process and related objectives in Afghanistan and thereby ensuring that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account;

(k) To recognize the importance of linking security and development objectives, in order to achieve durable peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and in the wider region;

(l) To emphasize the importance of a regional approach to support security and prosperity in and around Afghanistan and underline the Council's commitment to contribute constructively in that regard;

(m) To recommend greater coordination between United Nations agencies and programmes in order to increase the effectiveness of the assistance provided on the ground, ensure greater transparency in the administration, including through anti-corruption measures, foster the more effective use of shrinking development and humanitarian aid and thereby promote a harmonized United Nations approach in Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries.

Annex II

Schedule of meetings of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

Saturday, 13 January 2018

1430	Arrival in Kabul
1620–1630	Safety briefing by the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat
1630–1730	Meeting with senior members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA):
	• Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto
	• Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Toby Lanzer
	• Acting Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political)
	• Chief of Staff, Denise Wilman
	• Special Adviser, Stephen Brooking
	• Chief of the Political Affairs Service, Scott Smith
	• Chief of the Human Rights Service, Danielle Bell
	• Chief of the Strategic Communications Service, Liam McDowall
1730–1830	Meeting with security officials:
	• National Security Adviser, Mohammad Hanif Atmar (lead)
	• Minister of Defence, Tariq Shah Bahrami
	• Minister of the Interior, Wais Ahmad Barmak
	• Director General of the National Directorate for Security, Masoom Stanekzai
1900–1930	Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Salahuddin Rabbani
1930	Dinner hosted by the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Sunday, 14 January 2018

0800–1300	Meeting with the President, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, ministers and senior officials:
	• Second Vice-President, Sarwar Danish
	• Chief Justice, Sayed Yousuf Halim
	• Minister of Finance, Eklil Ahmad Hakimi
	• Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Mujiburrahman Karimi
	• Minister of Justice, Abdul Basir Anwar

- Minister of Defence, Tariq Shah Bahrami
- Minister of the Interior, Wais Ahmad Barmak
- Attorney General, Mohammad Farid Hamidi
- Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Nargis Nehan
- Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Alema Alema
- National Security Adviser, Mohammad Hanif Atmar
- Director General of the National Directorate of Security, Masoom Stanekzai
- Director General of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Abdul Matin Bek
- Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Mahmoud Saikal
- Head of the Afghanistan Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission, Nader Nadery
- Secretary of the High Peace Council, Mohammad Akram Khpalwak
- Civil society representative, Nadima Sahar
- Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, Abdul Salam Rahimi
- Senior Adviser to the President, Mohammad Qayoumi
- Senior Adviser to the President, Farkhunda Zahra Naderi
- Adviser to the President, Shahrzad Akbar
- Adviser to the President, Fazel Mahmood Fazly

1020–1120 Meeting with the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, and senior officials:

- Second Chief Executive Officer, Mohammad Mohaqeq
- Head of Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Nasrullah Arsalaye
- Deputy Chairperson of the High Peace Council, Habiba Sarabi
- Senior Adviser to the Chief Executive on the Economy, Shafiq Qarizada
- Chief of Staff for the Office of the Chief Executive, Abdul Qahar Abed

1140–1230 Meeting on connectivity and infrastructure with:

- Senior Adviser to the President, Mohammad Qayoumi (lead)
- Minister of Agriculture, Nasir Ahmad Durrani
- Minister of the Economy, Mustafa Mastoor
- Minister of Trade and Commerce, Hamayoon Rasaw
- Minister of Transportation and Aviation, Mohammad Hamid Tahmasi
- Minister of Public Works, Yama Yari

- Director of the National Procurement Authority, Alham Omer Hotaki
- Senior Adviser to the President, Ajmal Ahmadi

1245–1345 Lunch with members of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC):

- IEC Commissioner, Wasima Badghisy (Acting Chairperson)
- IEC Commissioner, Abdul Qadir Quraishi
- IEC Commissioner, Gulajan Abdul Badih Sayad
- IEC Commissioner, Maliha Hassan
- IEC Commissioner, Mazullah Dawlaty
- IEC Commissioner, Rafiullah Bidar
- ECC Commissioner, Abdul Aziz Ariaey (Chairperson)
- ECC Commissioner, Humaira Haqmal
- ECC Commissioner, Ali Reza Rohani
- ECC Commissioner, Ghulam Dastgir Hedayat
- ECC Commissioner, Abdul Basir Fayez
- Chief Executive Officer of IEC, Shahla Haque
- Director of the Central Statistics Organization, Jawid Rasuli
- Director General of Population Registration, Humayun Muhtat

1400–1515 Meeting on peace with:

- Head of the High Peace Council, Karim Khalili
- National Security Adviser, Mohammad Hanif Atmar
- Director General of the National Directorate of Security, Masoom Stanekzai
- Secretary of the High Peace Council, Mohammad Akram Khpalwak
- Deputy of the High Peace Council, Habiba Sarabi

1515–1615 Meeting on the economy, development, refugees and combating corruption with:

- Minister of Finance, Eklil Ahmad Hakimi (lead)
- Attorney General, Mohammad Farid Hamidi
- Minister of the Economy, Mustafa Mastoor
- Minister of Telecommunications, Shahzad Gul Aryobee
- Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Nargis Nehan
- Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Alema
- General Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Afghan Railway Authority, Yama Shams

- President's Senior Adviser, Mohammad Qayoumi
- Chief Executive Officer of Da Afghanistan Beshnak Sherkat Eng., Amanullah Ghalib
- Senior Adviser to the President, Ajmal Ahmadi

1615–1645 Meeting on parliamentary affairs with the Speakers of the parliament:

- Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga, Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi
- Speaker of the Meshrano Jirga, Fazal Hadi Muslimyar
- Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Farooq Wardak

1700–1730 Meeting on security with the Commander of the Resolute Support Mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, General John Nicholson

1730–1800 Meeting on women's empowerment with the First Lady, Rula Ghani, and 25 staff members of the Office of the First Lady

1815–1900 Tea with members of political parties

- Abdul Sattar Murad, representative of Jam'iyat-i Islami
- Mawlavi Qarloq, Deputy Head of Junbish-i Milli
- Muhammad Nateqi, Representative of Hizb-i Wahdat
- Mohammed Omar Daudzai, Representative of the Afghanistan Protection and Stability Council
- Sayed Mohammad Gailani, Representative of the Council of Jihadi Leaders
- Ghairat Bahir, Representative of Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin)

1900–1945 Meeting on human rights and civil society with:

- Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Sima Samar
- Afghan Women's Network, Hasina Safi
- Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan, Yousuf Rashid

2000 Dinner hosted by the President, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, with:

- Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah
- First Lady, Rula Ghani
- Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Mahmoud Saikal
- Diplomatic representatives

Monday, 15 January 2018

0825 Travel from Kabul to New York via Istanbul